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Features

Got the "I don't know which ISO to do" Blues? (Summer '01)

by Ned Hamson

INTRODUCTION

A tune with that title may never reach the top forty, but wondering which ISO step to take over the next year or so has many suppliers to the telecommunications, automotive, aerospace and medical devices industries joining a I-don't-know-which-step-to-take-first chorus.

Following the release of ISO 9000:2000 in December of last year, suppliers to these three industries have also seen the introduction of TL 9000 for telecommunications, ISO/TS 16949 for the auto industry, and AS 9000, as well as the announcement of SAE AS 9100 for aerospace. And this has left some wondering whether to get registered for the new ISO 9000:2000 standards series, get registered only for the industry specific standard, do both, or stand pat as one might think of doing in the auto industry with QS-9000.

To clear the air a bit and get some easy to follow advice, we have talked with BSI experts, industry leaders and people in the field to get their views and advice.

The first advice or reply common to all we talked with is the same practical advice given when ISO 9000 was first introduced: If your customers are requiring ISO 9000 or ISO 9000 industry-specific or equivalent registration as a contract or bidding condition, you will have to implement a quality system and be registered. Some companies, such as 3M, may not require that your firm be registered to both ISO 9000 or ISO 14001 (environmental management system), but will give the nod to bidders who are registered, all other items being equal. The result is the same, you should get registered. But get registered to what standard and does this mean multiple registrations and audits for us, are questions still left out there for some. For those answers, we went to the experts and people in the field.

Each industry in question is handled separately. You can read them as a totality or zero in on the industry that most matters to you.

Telecommunications and TL 9000

TL 9000 anticipated much of what was changed from ISO 9000:1994 to ISO 9000:2000, says Ashok Dandekar, Director of Quality and Program Management at Fujitsu Network Communications, Inc.. When TL 9000 is updated later this year it will be fully harmonized with ISO 9000:2000 says Dandekar, who serves on the QuEST Forum (the group drawn from industry leading telecommunications firms which designed and wrote TL 9000). Dandekar said his advise to those with questions of direction and what to do when, is pretty straight forward and he would consider the following points before making a decision.

- Are you currently TL 9000 registered?
- Are your customers asking you to be TL 9000 registered?
- If not, then first go for ISO 9000:2000. This would give you a solid base to move to new TL 9000. Transition from ISO 9000:2000 to new TL 9000 would not be a big deal. What differentiates TL 9000 from ISO 9000 is the measurements and reporting of index metrics involved in TL 9000. You need to set up a system for collecting, analyzing, and reporting metrics.
- Of course, if your customers are asking for TL 9000, then go for it and kill two birds in one stone.

Jeff Weitzer, Marketing and Communications Manager for the QuEST Forum notes that the Requirements have 12 months from March 31, 2001 (issue date of the Release 3.0) and the Measurements have six months from March 31, 2001. "As always, we recommend that any company work closely with their registrar to insure they are meeting all of the requirements and plan their transition plan accordingly."

Beyond the fact that your customer may be requiring you to register to do business with them and general quality returns on investment, Fujitsu's Dandekar noted that TL 9000's industry-wide comparative measurements make it more than worth the effort. One of the most important benefits, he says is that "we have now data available on competition. We call it comparative measurement -- its like benchmarking, but we use the word comparative measurement." TL 9000 requires that measurement data used to construct worst, average and best in class indices on 12 different measurement categories be reported to a secure third-party depository University of Texas at Dallas (UTD).

Dandekar says that the process is designed so that every quarter as the data comes in, both UTD and ASQ each publish data on each of those measurements, for each of the product categories. The data shows only three lines: Industry average, best in class, and worst in class.

What is the value of the data from the TL 9000 process? Again, Dandekar notes, "nobody knows, except ourselves, where we stand. And we know where we stand and how much we have to improve. Many suppliers were spending thousands of dollars on benchmarking and now we do not feel any need to do that."

Automotive: Stand pat with QS-9000:1998 or prepare and go for ISO/TS 16949?

Ian Coyle, Automotive Product Manager for BSI notes that those in the automotive industry must be careful to meet customer demand. "Ford and GM sent memos to their suppliers that they would recognize ISO/TS 16949 as equivalent to QS-9000. It was only an option as a trial period. But people like Fiat went one step further and said all their suppliers will now be ISO/TS 16949 compliant. The Germans and French are moving in that direction as well," Coyle says.

His clearest advice to suppliers is this: "If anyone out there in the US wants to be a worldwide supplier, they will have to meet that standard ISO/TS 16949 and not just QS-9000. By the end of this year, or in the next year ISO/TS 16949 will be upgraded and will mirror ISO 9000:2000. The chief benefit and reason to move to ISO/TS16949 is pretty straight forward, says Coyle -- ISO/TS 16949 eliminates multiple audits."

For those who feel need for the most authoritative reference possible, we turned to the International Automotive Task Force (IATF), a facet of the International Automotive Oversight Bureau (IAOB), and author of ISO/TS 16949. A Michigan corporation, IAOB's members include DaimlerChrysler, Ford Motor Company, General Motors and the Automotive Industry Action Group (AIAG). IATF members include: BMW, DaimlerChrysler, Fiat, Ford Motor Company, General Motors (including Opel Vauxhall), PSA Peugeot-Citroen, Renault SA, Volkswagen and their respective trade associations - AIAG (U.S.), ANFIA (Italy), FIEV (France), SMMT (U.K.) AND VDA (Germany).

The IAOB notes: "While not replacing the existing national quality system requirements, AVSQ, EAQF94, QS-9000 and VDA6.1, compliance with ISO/TS 16949, associated customer-specific requirements, and the IATF recognized registration scheme will be accepted as the international equivalent by IATF organizations, eliminating multiple certifications. Third-party certifications issued through any other scheme will not be recognized by the IATF."

Aerospace: AS 9000 and/or SAE AS 9100?

In aerospace, as in the automotive industry, industry leaders work with their suppliers and with other industry leaders to advance quality for the entire industry. AS 9100 was developed by the ISO Aerospace Technical Committee 20, Working Group 11, in association with international groups representing interested parties in Europe, Brazil, China, Japan and Mexico. It harmonizes aerospace requirements and is being adopted globally.

What is complicated for aerospace companies and suppliers is that Boeing is asking its suppliers to transition to the Boeing Quality Management System, which is ISO 9000 in conjunction with requirements under the SAE/AS 9100 standard. This is according to John Erladhi, Boeing Director of Quality.

Boeing has posted the following message to suppliers on its website: "Boeing will focus on transitioning its supplier base to AS 9100:1999 as the first step in achieving standardization across the Boeing Enterprise. When AS 9100-2001 is released, it will be evaluated for incorporation and plans will be developed as appropriate. However, to simplify the initial transition of Boeing's supplier base to the new BQMS standard, the expectation is for Boeing suppliers to transition to AS 9100: 1999. Transition to AS 9100:2001 will be addressed after Boeing's supplier base has been standardized on AS 9100:1999."

How long will that transition be if we take the Boeing expectations as a guide for the whole industry? Gene Baker - a Boeing Technical Fellow and member of the LA ASQ Section -- indicated during a section meeting on January 12, 2000 covering quality awards, that Boeing suppliers have two years to implement the standard.

To get a pragmatic view from the field, we spoke with Leon Dodd, currently Quality Manager for CSI in Kentucky, a metal stamping operation and first and second tier supplier in the auto industry. Dodd began his quality career with General Dynamics in Ft. Worth, Texas and has been a plant manager for aerospace supplier Aeronca in Ohio and CSI in Kentucky. He is now considering transitioning to being a full time ISO consultant or registrar so that he can pass on his experience to others.

Dodd's ISO 9000 and quality experience in both the aerospace and automotive industries, in a practical sense, demonstrates that ISO 9000 is indeed the base for a quality documentation system in any industry. And in that sense, his advice may be applied to implementing other industry-specific version of ISO 9000:2000.

Here is how Dodd would answer the question: Shall I adopt ISO 9000 and what about the industry specific versions of it?:

1. I would first ask "what" are my customer's requirements for a quality system. What are the basics that I must do in order to fulfill the basic requirements of the contract or purchase order.
2. Keep your quality process focused on real manufacturing processes and document them to meet your customer's requirements and audit team. When I was plant manager for Aeronca that meant documenting our production processes to meet the customer's specific product requirements and the documentation requirements of your customer. For example, when supplying Boeing a few years ago, we met the requirements of the customer and documented them according to the needs of Boeing's D1-9000 and ISO 9000 audit teams.
3. After you have identified the basic quality requirements like ISO 9000:2000 you would conduct a delta mapping of the requirements. Looking at the requirements and comparing it to your current quality assurance system - looking for the differences, the deltas. This is tough and you have to be critical enough to pass audits through a registrar. I have found over the years that the cross-functional team approach is the best way to get ISO 9000 implemented, understood, and trained throughout the organization.
4. Implement ISO 9000:2000 in such a way that it REALLY helps the company. If you have to do it, by all means do it in way that helps the floor do his/her job better with less re-work. Also, it may mean a flowchart, or pareto, or simply a picture with basic work instructions.
5. Seriously consider implementing a simple and enforceable weekly audit -- an ISO 9000 dashboard of critical indicators-- that links the ISO 9000 elements which are critical to a basic ISO system by putting them in a simple spreadsheet for weekly management team audits. If you audit these critical elements each week, then you do not have to do a hurry-up audit right before the registrar, supplier auditor, or your corporate auditor shows up."

Dodd's final advice, echoes that of BSI's Ian Coyle and Ashok Dandekar of Fujitsu: "ISO 9000:2000 is the base and the other standards are extensions of it. Start with the foundation, not the kitchen or the roof."

And, notes Dodd, "be smart when picking your ISO "contractor" or consultant and registrar. That is, select those qualified to advise and audit you on all the standards you must meet to satisfy your customers. When I moved Aeronca through the process, we had a registrar who could audit (and bill us) us first for ISO 9000 and then for Boeing's standard which preceded AS 9000 and SAE/AS 9100."